

Jewish **FRONTIER**

REPRINTS



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CHARLES A. BEARD
EXPOSES
ANTI-SEMITIC
FORGERY
ABOUT
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Published by the League for Labor Palestine

New York City

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FOREWORD

Has ever a forgery been nailed without its being resurrected again by bigots? It appears that no amount of exposing a lie is sufficient to kill it so long as those interested in perpetuating it remain. Despite the fact that rumors of anti-Semitic statements said to have been made by Benjamin Franklin have been exposed time and again, they have recently cropped up anew.

Speaking of these alleged statements, Dr. Charles A. Beard, outstanding historian and authority on Franklin, said in *JEWISH FRONTIER* of March, 1935:

"I cannot find a single original source that gives the slightest justification for believing that the 'Prophecy' is anything more than a barefaced forgery."

Now the Nazi bigots apparently feel that the forgery can be used again and the report of a mythical diary containing the alleged statements of Franklin is widely circulated. This time it was claimed that the original "private diary" was in the possession of the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. In the August issue of *The Institute News* published by the Franklin Institute, the director of that institution said:

"The truth is, we do not possess the notorious diary. In fact we know no more about its whereabouts than we did before, and that was nothing."

The director of the Institute suggests that those who would forge Franklin's writings would do well to acquaint themselves first with Franklin's authentic works. We quite agree with him when he says:

"We haven't the faith to believe that these present-day fanatics will immediately become civilized by reading Franklin's writings, but some good may result nevertheless."

The Nazi campaign of vilification continues. The lies which they spread in the attempt to stir up racial hatreds must be stamped out. The following article by Charles Beard, one of the most eminent historians in the country, can do much to nail the anti-Semitic forgery.



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Benjamin Franklin Forgery Exposed

by Charles A. Beard

ON FEBRUARY 3, 1934, William Dudley Pelley published in his journal "Liberation" a passage purporting to be an extract from the "Private Diary" of Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, in which Benjamin Franklin was quoted as denouncing Jews in unmeasured terms, with all the savagery of a Hitler or Goebbels. Mr. Pelley declared that Pinckney, as one of the framers of the Constitution, had taken notes on "Chit-chat around the table during Intermissions," that he had published this diary, that General W. T. Sherman had ordered the destruction of private libraries during the Civil War, and that among the rare books sacrificed was Pinckney's diary. But, Mr. Pelley went on to say, a copy survived in the hands of a descendant in the southwestern part of Georgia, and that the extract in "Liberation" was taken from this copy. Where the copy is now, who has it, Mr. Pelley did not state; nor has any copy yet been discovered by extensive researches.

In August, 1934, the "Weltdienst," an international news service, anti-Jewish in bias, published in Erfurt, Germany, in three languages—German, French and English—issued this alleged statement by Franklin condemning the Jews. In so doing it did not mention the name of Pinckney, but ascribed the document to the journal of a delegate to the constitutional convention of "1789."

Later in August, the "Volksbund," a Swiss Nazi organ reprinted the alleged Franklin's "Prophecy" ascribing its source to "co-workers in Germany."

In its issue of the first week of September, "Der Stuermer," the fiery organ published by Julius Streicher, contained a dispatch from its New York Correspondent, J. L. MacCormick, quoting the alleged Franklin "Prophecy" and using it as an introduction to an attack on the Jews in the customary Nazi style.

On September 20, the Jewish "Daily Bulletin," in commenting upon the article in "Der Stuermer,"

referred to the alleged prophecy of Franklin, without quoting it in detail or inquiring into its authority.

Five days later, September 25, 1934, Robert Edward Edmondson, who has been accused by Mr. John Spivak of being a Nazi agent in the United States, sent the alleged Franklin "Prophecy" to investment and brokerage houses, business men, and others interested in his program or subscribing to his "service." In the hands of Mr. Edmondson the document and its history take the following form. Although it is not exactly identical with the extract published by Mr. Pelley, it is the same in substance.

GREAT AMERICAN STATESMAN CREDITED
WITH FORESHADOWING PRESENT
POLITICO-ECONOMIC "RED CRISIS"

"Whatever country Jews have settled in any great numbers," said Franklin, "they have lowered its moral tone; depreciated its commercial integrity; have segregated themselves and have not been assimilated; have sneered at and tried to undermine the Christian religion upon which that nation is founded, by objecting to its restrictions; have built up a state within a state; and when opposed have tried to strangle that country to death financially, as in the case of Spain and Portugal."

"For over 1,700 years the Jews have been bewailing their sad fate in that they have been exiled from their homeland, as they call, Palestine. But, Gentlemen, did the world today give it to them in fee simple, they would at once find some cogent reason for not returning. Why? Because they are vampires, and vampires do not live on vampires. They cannot live on themselves. They must subsist on Christians and other peoples not of their race."

"If you do not exclude them from the United States, in this Constitution, in less than 200 years they will have swarmed in such great numbers that they will dominate and devour the land, and change our form of government, for which we Americans have shed our blood, given our lives, our substance and jeopardized our liberty."

"If you do not exclude them, in less than 200 years our descendants will be working in the fields to furnish them substance, while they will be in the counting houses rubbing their hands. I warn you, Gentlemen, if you do not exclude the Jews for all time, your children will curse you in your graves."

"Jews, Gentlemen, are Asiatics, let them be born where they will, or how many generations they are

away from Asia, they never will be otherwise. Their ideas do not conform to an American's, and will not even though they live among us ten generations. A leopard cannot change its spots. Jews are Asiatics, are a menace to this country if permitted entrance, and should be excluded by this Constitution."

"On the statute books of the United States is the Asiatic Exclusion Law by which Asiatics are prohibited from entering this country on the ground that they cannot be assimilated because 'their ideas do not conform' to the American customs and principles."

"If Red revolutionary Jews are Asiatics, would it not be in harmony with the aforesaid law to deport them as aliens illegally in the United States?"

"Col. E. N. Sanctuary, whose racial problem books have attracted widespread attention, is authority for the statements that out of 19 aliens arrested in the San Francisco general strike, 11 were 'Red' Jews—whose origin might well be Oriental."

"New York, Sept. 25, 1934, Robert Edward Edmondson" (Edmondson Economic Service, 80 Washington St., New York).

When this release by Mr. Edmondson came into my hands, I was amazed by the document. As a student of the writings of Pinckney and Franklin, I had never seen anything like it, and on October 15, 1934, I wrote to Mr. Edmondson asking him to give me the source from which his Franklin's "Prophecy" was taken, as I desired to examine the original myself. To my letter Mr. Edmondson replied that he understood that the "copy" for the "Prophecy" "emanated from Mr. Madison Grant of New York City, unauthenticated." He added that several investigations were being conducted to determine its authenticity, and that he had felt justified in issuing it because mention of it in the *Jewish Daily Bulletin* had caused a widespread demand for the story. In short, Mr. Edmondson published the alleged statement and then conducted inquiries to determine its authenticity.

Since Mr. Edmondson referred to Mr. Grant as the source of the story, I wrote to Mr. Grant on October 20, asking him to be good enough to tell me where I could find the original document. In reply, Mr. Grant stated that some years ago he had received what "purported" to be a copy of Franklin's remarks before the convention in Phila-

Franklin hatte Recht

„Die Juden werden USA. fressen“

Berlin, 8. März.

Ein Leser hat uns aus Anlaß der üblen Sehe-
reien des jüdischen Oberbürgermeisters von New-
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FEBRUARY 3, 1934

Did Benjamin Franklin Say this about the Hebrews?



At the beginning of the Civil War many copies of the Private Diary of Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, were to be found in that State. Pinckney was one of the framers of the Constitution of the United States, and published his Diary for private distribution among his friends under the title: *Chit-Chat Around the Table During Intermission*. By special order of Gen. William T. Sherman, very nearly all of the fine copies of the Diary in the United States up to 1861 were destroyed, and among the rare books sacrificed was Charles Pinckney's Diary. Among the few copies extant is one given by Mr. Pinckney to his daughter, who married Etheldred Hays, and with him emigrated to the recently opened land of the Creek Indians in 1817, in the extreme part of southwest Georgia. It is from this copy that the following extract has been taken. Says Mr. Pinckney:—

DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, a venerable figure, weighed down by years and wisdom, leaned one hand on his staff, the other on the table and said: "I fully agree with General Washington that we must safeguard this young nation, as yet in its swaddling clothes, from the insidious influence and impu- pauperize and they hold sw United States a large numb and women descendants "This g "In w numbers th its comm not assing the Chri objectin State, a to dea

themselves only. They must subsist on Christians, and other peoples not of their race. "If you do not exclude them from the United States in this Constitution, in less than two hundred years they will have swarmed here in such great numbers that they will dominate and devour the land, and change our form of government for which we Americans have shed our blood, given our lives, our substance, jeopardized our liberty, and put into it our best thoughts. "If you do not exclude them, in less than two hundred years our descendants will be working in the fields to furnish them sustenance, while they will be in the counting houses, rubbing their hands gleefully. "I warn you, gentlemen, that if you do not exclude the Jews for all time, your children's children will curse you in your graves!

JEWS, gentlemen, are Asiatics. Let them be born where they will, or how many generations they are away from Asia, and they will never be otherwise. Their ideas among us conform to an American's, even though they live among us ten generations. A leopard cannot change its spots. Jews are Asiatics, are a menace to this country if permitted entrance, and should be excluded by this Constitution! Such is Benjamin Franklin's reliably reputed version and opinion of a question which now vexes 115,000,000 Gentile Christians, beset on every hand by exactly the same horde. "We were greatly surprised," comments Pinckney, "at the words of Dr. Franklin, more especially as there were then only about five hundred of the creatures (Jews) in the country."

Franklin hatte recht

„Die Juden werden USA. fressen“

dnb Berlin, 8. März.

Aus Anlaß der üblen Sehe-
reien des jüdischen Oberbürgermeisters von New-
York, La Guardia, hat ein Leser dem „Angriff“ das Urteil Benjamin Franklins
über das Judentum zugesandt. Die prophetischen Worte des großen amerikanischen
Staatsmannes haben sich leider als nur zu wahr erwiesen. Er forderte kurz vor
seinem Tode im Jahre 1789, daß die neue amerikanische Bundesrepublik die Juden
aus dem Lande ausschließen solle.

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Photostat of *Liberation* for February 3, 1934. William Dudley Pelley's sheet put its headline as a question, then treated the alleged quotations as fact. The reader will note, as Dr. Beard points out, that even the language is not of the 18th century.

The German clipping on the left is from *Der Angriff* and the one below from the *Voelkscher Beobachter*, both of recent date, as can be seen. The directing hand of the Nazi government news service is evident in the uniformity of headline and release date.

delphia, but had "no information, whatever as to the authenticity of the paper."

Although I was pretty well convinced by this time that the Franklin "Prophecy" was a pure fabrication, I had been taught by bitter experience the dangers of drawing a negative conclusion. It was not easy in historical writing to prove a negative in the absence of authentic evidence. So I wrote to an old friend of mine, one of the outstanding scholars in the United States, a man most familiar with the writings of both Franklin and Pinckney. Should I mention his name, his authority would be immediately recognized, but I must not bring him into this affair. To my inquiry this scholar replied that there are indications which make it almost certain that Pinckney did not keep a diary of convention proceedings. He added that there is nowhere any evidence that Franklin ever made such a speech and that it is inconceivable that he should ever have done so. In addition, my friend declared flatly: "The alleged Franklin document is merely a forgery, and a crude one at that."

Although convinced by this scholar's report that the Franklin "Prophecy" was a crude forgery, I still had the historian's suspicion that there might be somewhere in Franklin's writings one or more remarks derogatory to the Jews, which could furnish some slender basis for the fabrication. So, I searched Franklin's writings myself, and had searches made by scholarly assistants in the available records, including the vast collections of Frankliniana in Philadelphia. I have sought the alleged Diary of Pinckney.

All these searches have produced negative results. I cannot find a single original source that gives the slightest justification for believing that the "Prophecy" is anything more than a bare-faced forgery. Not a word have I discovered in Franklin's letters and papers expressing any such sentiments against the Jews as ascribed to him by the Nazis — American and German. His well-known liberality in matters of religious opinions would, in fact, have precluded the kind of utterances put in his mouth by this palpable forgery.

Had he or any members of the Constitutional convention entertained such violent convictions it is scarcely possible that they would have allowed the opportunity to pass for putting a bar in the Constitution when provisions for the regulation of foreign commerce and for naturalization were up for consideration. The proceedings of the convention were secret and any member was free to speak his mind without fear of publicity. Franklin was then an old man beyond all earthly ambitions and spoke freely without thought of effects on his political career. In his writings on immigration, Franklin made no mention of discrimination against Jews.

So much for the negative evidence to the effect that Franklin did not utter the sentiments expressed in the alleged "Prophecy" or say anything which could be twisted to imply that he entertained any such views. On the other side there is positive evidence that he held Jews in high regard. When the Hebrew Society of Philadelphia sought to raise money for "a religious house," or synagogue, in Philadelphia, Franklin signed the petition of appeal for contributions to "citizens of every religious denomination," and gave £5 himself to that fund. If he held the views falsely ascribed to him, he would scarcely have given money and lent his influence in the promotion of the Society's project.

Strange as it may seem to the creators and circulators of this alleged "Prophecy," the only racial immigration which Franklin feared was the influx of Germans, and he did not propose to set up a bar against them. In view of the fact that German Nazis make so much of the Franklin forgery, it seems fitting to include here just what Franklin did say about the Germans in a letter written in 1753:

"I am perfectly of your mind that measures of great temper are necessary with the Germans; and am not without apprehension, that, through their indiscretion, or ours, or both, great disorders may one day arise among us. Those who come hither are generally the most stupid of their own nation, and as ignorance is often attended with credulity when knavery would mislead it, and with suspicion when honesty would set it right; and as few of the English understand the Ger-

man language, and so cannot address them either from the press or the pulpit, it is almost impossible to remove any prejudice they may entertain. Their clergy have very little influence on the people, who seem to take a pleasure in abusing and discharging the minister on every trivial occasion. Not being used to liberty they know not how to make a modest use of it. And as Holben says of the young Hottentots, that they are not esteemed men until they have shown their manhood by beating their mothers, so these seem not to think themselves free, till they can feel their liberty in abusing and insulting their teachers. Thus they are under no restraint from ecclesiastical government; they behave, however, submissively enough at present to the civil government, which I wish they may continue to do, for I remember when they modestly declined intermeddling in our elections, but now they come in droves and carry all before them, except in one or two counties.

"Few of their children in the country know English. They import many books from Germany; and of the six printing houses in the province, two are entirely German, two half-German, half-English, and but two entirely English. They have one German newspaper, and one half-German. Advertisements, intended to be general, are now printed in Dutch and English. The signs in our streets have inscriptions in both languages, and some places only in German. They begin of late to make all their bonds and other legal instruments in their own language, which (though I think it ought not to be) are allowed good in our courts, where the German business so increases that there is continued need of interpreters; and I suppose in a few years they will also be necessary in the Assembly, to tell half of our legislators what the other half say.

"In short, unless the stream of their importation could be turned from this to other colonies, as you very judiciously propose, they will soon so outnumber us that all the advantages we have will, in my opinion, not be able to preserve our language, and even our government will become precarious."

One more point should be made in respect of this "Prophecy" ascribed to Franklin: The phraseology of the alleged "Prophecy" is not that of the eighteenth century; nor is the language that of Franklin. It contains certain words that belong to contemporary Germany rather than America of Franklin's period. For example, the word "homeland" was not employed by Jews in Franklin's time. It was created in connection with the Palestine mandate. Furthermore the return to Pales-

tine, or Zionism, was not a popular movement at that time. Few, if anyone, dreamed that Palestine could then be wrested from Turkish rule and made a homeland for Jews.

What is, then, the upshot? This alleged "Prophecy" ascribed to Franklin is a crude forgery, and his name should be cleared of the crass prejudices attributed to him. There is in our historical records no evidence whatever of any basis for the falsehood. Whoever encounters this piece of propaganda should nail it at once. If the gentlemen who have given it currency have any honor, they will either produce their proof or publicly confess their offence.

Those willing to attack character in the name of falsehood may go their way, but unless the spirit of scholarship and fair play is dead in America they will be challenged at every point in their sinuous career.

FOR AUTHORITATIVE
AND ENLIGHTENING INTERPRETATION
of the
EVENTS IN PALESTINE
and
CONDITIONS OF WORLD JEWRY
read the

Jewish **FRONTIER**

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HAYIM FINEMAN

MARIE SYRKIN

SUBSCRIPTION: \$2.00 PER YEAR

JEWISH FRONTIER

275 SEVENTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

"... For the Values of the Scientific and Humane Spirit ..."

THESE are times when physical force is exalted. It is widely deemed old-fashioned, outmoded, and infantile to speak of an appeal to reason, to exalt toleration as a virtue in itself, and to believe that truth has any part in practical affairs. That this is the situation in which we find ourselves calls for no illustrations. They lie on every hand and come upon our vision from every angle.

Yet there are a few left in the world who have not surrendered to this spirit of the times. There are a few who still believe that force, lying and deceit are not virtues in themselves, and that no civilization worth having can be founded upon them. It is these few who propose to keep the channels of discussion open and to cherish respect for demonstrated facts and for the values of the scientific and humane spirit. They do not propose to surrender to wrath and unreason, but to do battle to the bitter end in the belief that hope, as Shelley says, can create from its own wreck the thing it contemplates.

Although the following paragraphs deal with a single issue in this conflict between force and reason, deceit and respect for facts, they illustrate all too vividly the nature of the struggle now being waged. They show the lengths to which force will go in efforts to gain its end, the chicanery to which it will resort, the depths of unreason to which it will sink. Still more significant, perhaps, it shows how wide a currency may be given to a palpable lie, wittingly or unwittingly, by the press and by men presumed to have honor.

CHARLES A. BEARD.

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